

Calendar No. 1393

77TH CONGRESS }
2d Session }

SENATE

{ REPORT
{ No. 1351

EXCHANGE OF LANDS IN THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, PA.

MAY 18 (legislative day, MAY 15), 1942.—Ordered to be printed

Mr. REYNOLDS, from the Committee on Military Affairs, submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany S. 2488]

The Committee on Military Affairs, to whom was referred the bill (S. 2488) to authorize the exchange of lands in the city of Philadelphia, Pa., between the War Department and the city of Philadelphia, trustee under the will of Stephen Girard, deceased, having considered the same, report favorably thereon with recommendation that it do pass.

The design of this bill is to authorize the Secretary of War to convey to the city of Philadelphia, trustee under the will of Stephen Girard, deceased, all right, title, and interest of the United States in and to a triangular parcel of land containing 13,715.84 square feet, more or less, situated at the northeast corner of and comprising a portion of the Philadelphia Quartermaster Depot, Pennsylvania, and fronting on Oregon Avenue east of Twenty-first Street in the city of Philadelphia, Pa., and to accept in exchange therefor the fee-simple title to a strip of land containing 9,819.75 square feet, more or less, and being the northern portion of what was formerly Johnston Street west of Twentieth Street in the city of Philadelphia, Pa., the exchange of lands authorized to be made under such terms and conditions as the Secretary of War may prescribe.

The reasons for the exchange of the parcels of lands described in the bill are explained in the War Department letter which follows:

WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington, April 20, 1942.

Hon. ROBERT R. REYNOLDS,
Chairman, Committee on Military Affairs,
United States Senate, Washington, D. C.

DEAR SENATOR REYNOLDS: There is enclosed draft of a bill to authorize the exchange of lands in the city of Philadelphia, Pa., between the War Department and the city of Philadelphia, trustee under the will of Stephen Girard, deceased,

which the War Department presents for the consideration of the Congress with a view to its enactment into law.

The purpose of the proposed legislation is to authorize an exchange of a parcel of Government-owned land containing 13,715.84 square feet, comprising a portion of the Philadelphia Quartermaster Depot, Philadelphia, for a strip of land containing 9,819.75 square feet adjoining said reservation and owned by the Girard estate. There is no existing law which authorizes the exchange of the properties included in the bill.

The attached map indicates minor real-estate activities as planned between the city of Philadelphia, representatives of the War Department at the Philadelphia Quartermaster Depot, and the Girard estate for the purpose of facilitating motor traffic to and from the depot and squaring up the boundaries of the reservation and of the Girard estate.

Under date of April 1, 1941, an easement was granted by the War Department to the city of Philadelphia for a right-of-way over a strip of land 10 feet in width along the west side of Twentieth Street to the Delaware extension of the Pennsylvania Railroad on the depot reservation in order to widen said street to care for increased traffic caused by the expansion of the depot. The Girard estate similarly dedicated a strip of land on the west side of Twentieth Street between Oregon Avenue and Johnston Street. In return, there was stricken from the city plan all of the streets formerly plotted within the boundaries of the reservation, together with Johnston Street from Twentieth to Twenty-first Street. With this action, the physically open Johnston Street from Twentieth Street westward ceased to be a public highway, and the title to its bed reverted to the abutting owners, viz, the Girard estate on the north and the depot on the south. It is highly desirable that the depot acquire jurisdiction over the entire street as the depot is now erecting its administration buildings along the south side of the street facing the strip owned by the Girard estate and proposes to place the main gate at Twentieth and Johnston Streets.

The Girard estate has signified its willingness to make an equal exchange of the above-mentioned strip for a triangular parcel of land at the northeast corner of the reservation, containing 13,715.84 square feet on Oregon Avenue east of Twenty-first Street. This plot has been used for entrance to the depot by the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad from its spur running east and west on Oregon Avenue. When the rerouting of the railroad tracks on the reservation, now in progress, is completed, the Baltimore & Ohio will remove its tracks from this section, including the spur, and enter the reservation at another point. Thus, the triangular parcel will be useless to the depot, but would square out the lines of the Girard estate property as well as the boundaries of the depot property.

The plot on Oregon Avenue containing 13,715.84 square feet, proposed to be conveyed to the Girard estate, has been appraised at \$1,500, whereas the property fronting on Twentieth Street, to be acquired in exchange, while containing only 9,819.75 square feet, has been appraised at \$2,000, although both parcels are located in practically the same block. This disparity is due to the fact that the parcel on Oregon Avenue, although having a frontage of 218 feet, is so irregular in shape that the entire frontage could not be utilized except by a party owning the land adjacent thereto. Moreover, Oregon Avenue is unimproved, and it is indefinite when any arrangements may be made for its improvement. The parcel fronting on Twentieth Street has all improvements in, and has considerable value for retail purposes such as restaurant, drug store, soda fountain, etc.

The enactment of the enclosed bill into law will not require the authorization of any appropriation of public funds to carry out its provisions.

The Bureau of the Budget advises that there is no objection to the submission of this proposed legislation for the consideration of Congress.

Sincerely yours,

HENRY L. STIMSON,
Secretary of War.